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# **José Joaquín de Mora in Chile: from Neo-Europe to the ‘*Beocia Americana*’**

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The Spanish jurist, poet and journalist José Joaquín de Mora was probably the first foreign political consultant to be hired by several different South American governments in the period immediately following the wars of independence (mid 1820s-1830s). This paper takes a transnational approach to focus on his activities concerning Chile. It argues that Mora fitted the requirements of regional elites who aspired to have the New World drenched in European cultural values to make it a beacon of rational liberty, particularly for the Old World under the autocratic constraints of the Holy Alliance.

Keywords: nation-building; Enlightenment; constitutions; liberalism; factionalism; transnational history.

The personal experience of José Joaquín de Mora has all the hallmarks of an ideal conduit to reach back into the Chile of the 1820s and early 1830s, doubly so because his life and career challenge many assumptions about the period that immediately followed the Latin American wars of independence. This Spanish jurist, poet and journalist was probably the first foreign political consultant to be hired for the delicate business of new nation-state building by several different South American governments (Buenos Aires, Chile, the Peruvian-Bolivian

Confederation). Before ever setting foot on American soil Mora contributed to placing Chile on the world map as an independent republic; it was also in Chile where he had the chance of testing the greatest number of his polymathic projects (Amunátegui, 1888; Monguió, 1965: 325-28; Monguió, 1967: 7-49, 116-133, 158-9) and where within just three years, he co-authored the liberal constitution of 1828, became the confidant of President Francisco Antonio Pinto, and founded the *Liceo de Chile* and the newspaper *El Mercurio Chileno*.

His was a life in constant motion, one marked by intellectual hyperactivity and unplanned globetrotting; also one that resonates with current interests in the study of post-colonial connections (e.g. Brown and Paquette, 2013) and transnational history. This article combines such perspective with a biographical approach to establish what the life of José Joaquín de Mora is capable of revealing about the history of post-independent Chile - a country that was embedded in a wider world. The following pages are informed by the work of scholars who, blurring boundaries between biography, global, transnational and micro-history have highlighted the importance of looking into an individual's past in order to gain valuable insights into a subsequent moments in history (e.g. Ghobrial, 2013). The story of Mora's involvement in Chilean political life makes sense only with reference to the world he left behind. He was the kind of man who never stopped thinking of the places he felt compelled to abandon – more than anything else, he could not stop thinking of Europe. His mind remained anchored in the long eighteenth-century culture of the Old World. It is no wonder that, as we shall see, he was head-hunted by various members of South American elites who aspired to have the New World drenched in the best European cultural values. They were, of course, essentialising Europe - a continent Mora once defined as that which 'is renowned for the wisdom, culture, intelligence, and activity of its inhabitants' (Mora, 1823: 3). Yet this was not to make the Americas a carbon copy of Europe, but a beacon of *libertad racional* (rational liberty) for the rest of the world, especially for the Old Continent that

appeared to have lost its way under the autocratic regimes of the Holy Alliance. This tacit agenda subscribed to Western ideas of Enlightenment and neo-classicism that were expected to make of Spanish America a sort of 'Neo-Europe', to borrow here the term used by Alfred W. Crosby, if not fully in terms of his biological thesis (Crosby, 2004: 2-3). The implementation of this project went through many ups and downs - a journey that would end up with Mora re-branding Chile as the *Beocia Americana* (Stupid American).

## **Formative Years**

Mora was born in Cadiz on 10 January 1783, the year the American war of independence came to a close. His father was a lawyer; his grandfather, a school teacher. They were not poor, but neither enjoyed a life of privilege. Mora developed a fetish for long hours of toil in tandem with the conviction that by blending education with grinding work it was possible to guarantee at the same time individual moral perfectibility and wider social equality (Mora, 1849: 14). On a personal level, sweat and intellectual exertion paid off, but only late in his career. For most of his life Mora had no choice but to offer his intellect for hire. To bring about his own projects, he had to rely on the support of wealthy and influential patrons, including the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the Argentine politician Bernardino Rivadavia, the Chilean general Francisco Antonio Pinto and the caudillo of the Andes Andrés de Santa Cruz.

During his formative years in Spain, Mora developed a strong aversion to any model of government that favoured the concentration of power in a single person or corporation. In his eyes, this was the despotism that tainted the Spanish and French Bourbons, Napoleon and eventually Simon Bolivar (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: I-527-9; *El defensor de los militares constitucionales*, 1830. Gobierno militar, 17 July, p. 2). This conviction was buttressed by a

deep hatred of all privileges, particularly those exercised by the aristocracy and the high clergy. Such detestation was to find direct expression in article 126 of the Constitution of 1828 that proclaimed that in Chile *no hai clase privilegiada* (there is no privileged class) (Bronfman, 2006: 156). But he was not an anti-elitist. Mora argued that all societies need an elite of *hombres públicos* (public men), not based on birth or wealth, but on having a suitable education in moral philosophy. Only under this condition would they be able to both represent the people and work as a shield capable of deterring rulers from seizing control over illiterate and uncouth masses. Explaining the spirit of the Constitution of 1828 in the pages of *El Mercurio Chileno* Mora would make this point explicit, stating ‘that the predominant mass in terms of numbers is always proletarian and therefore dependent on some other mass smaller in number and superior in moral force. Without such an intermediate body, the government would become the absolute owner of that vast heap (*El Mercurio Chileno*, 1828. Política Constitucional - Espíritu de la Constitución, September, issue 6, pp. 283-4. Yet he had no desire to be part of this sort of elite buffer-zone. He set for himself a far more ambitious agenda: he wanted to shape the minds of the ruling elite (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 518-20; 532).

Much of his own education was the product of the training in Classics he received at the University of Granada, including the *Curso General de Humanidades* which featured in all higher education institutions of the Hispanic world. In 1808 he joined the Spanish armed resistance to Napoleon, but was soon captured and transported under gruelling conditions to a prisoners’ camp in Autun. Five years of captivity served to instil in him a long-lasting antipathy to the French in general, and to their political practices in particular. To his mind, the latter could invariably be shortened to examples of Napoleon’s tyranny, Bourbon absolutism and the excesses of demagogic Jacobinism (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 515). Francophobia never undermined his admiration for the literary work of Nicolas Boileau-

Despréaux nor for the ideas of the *idéologue* Antoine Destutt de Tracy (MS Bentham Papers 33.545, fol. 447), authors that he would later discuss in detail with South American friends (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 515; *El Mercurio Chileno*, 1828. Economía política, issue 1, April, pp. 50-52). Nor did Francophobia dissuade him from marrying the daughter of an Autun justice of peace, Françoise Delauneux (1791-1887), his beloved *Fanny* who would become his intellectual equal and partner in practically all his endeavours, including those destined to further female education (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 504-534; Macintyre, 2013: 179-89).

## **A Cultural Clash**

In the year Chile declared its independence, 1818, Mora had no reason to abandon Spain. During the first Fernandine Restoration (1814-1820), he managed to make a reasonable living as a lawyer, playwright and journalist. Friendship with one of the most progressive members of the court, the Duque del Parque, had him dispatched by the King in a secret mission to Rome, to recruit members of the Vatican's Swiss Guards to act as royal bodyguards (MS Bentham Papers 33.545, fol. 475; Amunátegui, 1888: 20-25; Pizarro, 1984: 365). All in all, this was an experience far removed from the image of rabid radicalism and anti-clericalism much of the historiography has tended to confer on Mora. Yet this was also the period of the famous *querella calderoniana* when Mora, defending neo-classicism and a non-Rousseauian enlightenment, opposed Nicolás Böhl de Faber, who sponsored a revival of Spanish seventeenth-century literature, mainly of Calderón's dramas. This was not a mere literary debate, but a clash between two different conceptions of the world that was carried out in the pugnacious and cantankerous language that ultimately became Mora's signature journalistic style. What he found unacceptable in the Romanticism of Böhl de Faber was not just that it glorified an age regarded as politically repressive, but that the supremacy of reason and the existence of eternal laws of regularity and order were doubted and undermined.

The defence of rationalism and of a regulated order within society were concerns Mora shared with Jeremy Bentham. His relationship with one of the founders of modern utilitarianism was initiated by the intervention of Edward Blaquiére, one of Bentham's 'apostles' who saw in the early days of the Liberal Triennium (1820-23) a chance to introduce *benthamism* to the Hispanic world. Through him, Bentham engaged Mora's services not just as translator but as a lobbyist. He was to organise the publication in Spanish of his *Traité de Législation Civile et Pénale* and gather parliamentary support for his critical analysis of the recently reinstated Political Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy, commonly known as the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 (Conway, 1989: 493-97).

It would be a mistake to presume that Mora subscribed blindly to what Raymond Carr once described as the Liberal Codex of the early nineteenth century (Carr, 1966: xvi, 94). Nor should it be taken for granted that he used this text as a blueprint for the Chilean constitution of 1828. There are similarities in the language and in the structure of the two documents, but the same could be said about the Chilean constitution of 1823. These analogies could be attributed to a shared Hispanic cultural and political tradition. The charter of 1812 was not a *Spanish* Constitution, at least not in the sense people tend to call it today, but the Constitution of the *Spanish Monarchy*, a realm which encompassed much of South America and the Philippines, as well as a good part of the Iberian peninsula. Fifty-three of the 185 deputies who signed the Cadiz charter were Spanish Americans, including two Chileans (Rodríguez Ordoñez, 2005; Portillo Valdez, 2006; Breña, 2013). In his epistolary dialogue with Bentham, Mora praised the Gaditan text for its 'eminently popular spirit', but shared the English thinker's criticism of the absence of trial by jury and the limit of eight years of continuous constitutional exercise before any reform of the text could be undertaken. Mora ascribed the latter to a well-intended move to quash plans the aristocracy could have had for the introduction of English-style bicameralism. Regarding the system of government, Mora

favoured a republic, but was prepared to accept a constitutional monarchy provided that people were allowed to select the ruling dynasty. The Cadiz text made no such provision. Nor did it include any principle of censitary democracy, at least with regard to the utilitarian notion of 'active citizen' first enshrined in the French Constitution of 1791 (Monnier, 2003: 97; Gauchet, 1989: 121-22) . This was one of the concepts that would establish a line of continuity between the Chilean Constitution of 1823 and the one Mora was to be commissioned to replace in 1828 which denied citizenship to domestic servants, fiscal debtors and people with disabilities (article 8).

Of the British political model, Mora singled out for praise the defence of freedoms of expression, of trade and religious tolerance, principles which, in his view, were experiencing no progress under the Liberal Triennium. The first time he was imprisoned for political reasons was after denouncing the 'ministerial despotism' that led the *Cortes* to restrict freedom of the press and the organisation of public meetings. He also claimed that an amnesty that allowed the return of *afrancesados* had the effect of splitting the liberal family into two negative extremes: one characterised by the obscurantism of bureaucratic despotism; the other by the *sansculotism* of Comuneros and Carbonari logias who thrived on mob support. Liberalism took a number of quite different forms, all of these broadly based upon the Enlightenment aim of securing greater freedom for individuals; yet it has also been said that in some contexts liberalism resulted in a political philosophy based upon the fear of freedom rather than upon genuine liberal concerns (Bellamy, 1987). Much of the historiography has placed Mora in the progressive side of the spectrum. In Spain there are scholars who still associate him with the *exaltados* (Suarez Cortina, 2006: 97), a view based more on his character than on his ideas which were more akin to those of the Spanish *moderados* and to some extent the French *doctrinaires*. Writing from jail, he told the author of the *Anarchical fallacies* that of all the evils Spain was suffering the greatest was the



inclination of the dominant faction toward direct democracy (MS Bentham Papers 33.545 fol. 40; Rosenblum, 1978: 62-3; *The Morning Chronicle*, 9 June 1823: 4).

## **A Neo-European Project**

Eventually Mora was released, but having earned a reputation as a liberal troublemaker, the second Fernandine Restoration presented few prospects. In May 1823, the Mora family went into exile. Weeks after arriving in London, he began working for the publisher Rudolph Ackermann, translating copiously and producing an array of educational works for the Spanish American market, all part of an enterprise mainly financed by the Ecuador-born former Cadiz deputy Vicente Rocafuerte (Rodríguez Ordoñez, 1975: 181). This included a version of Pinnock's *Catechism of Geography* then in its 20<sup>th</sup> edition. Although constantly updated for teaching in monitorial schools, the original text in English contained little or no information about the newly independent South American republics. The Socratic question-and-answer style of the catechism imposed clear-cut definitions, and as a consequence Mora was commissioned to fill the gaps with the information he had at hand, to which he added a dose of creativity.

At a time when Chile was struggling to gain recognition as an independent republic (Collier and Sater, 1996: 39; Caldcleugh, 1825), the answer Mora provided to the question 'What is Chile?' conferred much-needed substance and gravitas to the country's aspirations: 'A republican State formed by the territories that formerly constituted the viceroyalty of Chile' (Mora, 1823: 72). Although never a viceroyalty but a captaincy-general, Chile's description as a worthy self-determined republic sounded categorical. The impression was reinforced visually within a folding *mapamundi* placed as the book's frontispiece and where the country's name, spelt in bold capital letters that followed the spinal cord of the southern

Andes, was given equal ranking to those of nations whose governments had already been recognised by Britain, mainly that of Buenos Aires. As Roldán Vera has shown, the publications of Ackerman played a key role in forging national and continental identities in the Americas; chiefly by providing thirsty-for-knowledge rising elites with little access to formal education the means to learn without teachers. In his *Recuerdos de provincia*, the liberal intellectual and future president of Argentina, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, a man who would spend an eventful period of exile in Chile, fondly recalled how, aged 15, Ackerman's catechisms became a godsend, a lifeline to a world of knowledge that, he contended, could only have been prepared by 'patriots who loved America well' (Roldán Vera, 2003:146-9; Sarmiento, 1995: 237-8).

The success of Ackerman's publishing venture turned Mora into a celebrity. One of the most important figures of post-independence Central America, the Honduran José Cecilio Díaz del Valle pleaded for the Spaniard to increase the transatlantic flow of enlightened material: 'I entreat you, Mr Mora, to keep on enlightening the New World from the first capital of the Old' (Del Valle, 1978: 328-331). This was not supposed to foster a uni-directional relationship of dependency, but rather to make of America an agent for the political regeneration of the Old World through the exercise of concepts of human rights, individual liberty and political representation that emanated from a Eurocentric enlightenment discourse of universal progress (Munck, 2006: 175-86). As Del Valle explained:

'A free, rich and powerful America would be in a position to protect the liberty of Europe, it would help those who desire it and work for it; the people would finally acquire the constitutions through their chosen representatives'. (Del Valle, 1978: 392-3)

The Honduran felt bitterly disappointed when Rivadavia pre-empted his plans by hiring Mora to act as his consultant in Buenos Aires (Del Valle, 1978: 332-3, 392-3). Jorge Myers argues that Rivadavia and his followers should not be considered a political faction but a ‘cultural formation’ that encapsulated a so-called post borbonic ‘structure of feeling’ (*passim* Raymond Williamson) of *porteño* society set on a mission to establish a civilising ‘gobierno de las luces’ (enlightened government) (Myers, 2003: 77-93; Adelman, 1999: 98-101). This interpretation could be equally applied to other contemporaneous South American elites such as those of Honduras and Chile. In view of the above mentioned desire to make of the Americas a catalytic example for the Old World through the adoption of Eurocentric principles of enlightenment, the term ‘Neo-European’ seems more fitting than ‘post borbonic’, which comes across as unfortunate for a ‘cultural formation’ that sought to uproot itself from the political practices of Bourbon regimes.

In London, the Chilean envoy Mariano Egaña had received precise instructions to recruit as many Europeans as possible for the enterprise of nation-making. Spaniards were not excluded although it was well-known that since the wars of independence all *peninsulares* tended to be seen as reactionary and obscurantist *sarracenos* (Saracens) or *godos* (goths) (Collier and Sater, 1996: 41). In the hundreds of Spanish émigrées seeking refuge in the English capital, Egaña saw ‘the opportunity not to come again in centuries’ to send to his country learned people who not only shared the same language but also a profound distaste for absolutism (Legación chilena en Francia y en Gran Bretaña, vol. 6, fol. 1). There are no indications that he ever contacted Mora, but this seems to have been more by accident than design. Two years later, not knowing that they would end up in opposite sides of the political divide, his father, Juan Egaña, author of the constitution of 1823, hailed news that the Spaniard had been offered various positions at the Chilean ministries of Economy and Interior (Bulnes, 1946: 248).

By the time the Moras landed in Buenos Aires in February 1827, the government of Rivadavia was already in its dying days. War with Brazil had sent the Argentine economy into an inflationary tailspin. The government was besieged by an opposition composed of landowners of the Buenos Aires province and federalists from the rest of the country who resisted plans for a centralist constitution, also by critics of Rivadavia's ecclesiastical reforms (Gallo, 2006). Against this background, Mora decided to adopt a strategy of defence by attack through the pages of two government-sponsored publications he established with the Neapolitan Pedro de Angelis: the newspaper *Crónica Política y Literaria de Buenos Aires* and the one-off 82-page magazine mockingly entitled *El Conciliador*. Rivadavia's opponents were described either as partisans of bigoted, oriental-style despotism or as demagogic proponents of direct democracy, that is to say, along similar lines to those saboteurs Mora had blamed for the failure of the Liberal Triennium back in Spain.

Rivadavia resigned in June, but Mora continued vindicating his regime in the press for a few months longer. Fanny and his partner's wife, the Swiss Melanie Dayet, opened a school for girls, the *Colegio Argentino*. Female instruction was not a novelty in Buenos Aires, but their combination of English and French intellectual education with physical and religious activities certainly was. *Porteño* high society subscribed enthusiastically to the scheme (Monguió, 1965: 65; Macintyre, 2013: 179-89; Biblioteca Nacional de Chile (BNL) *Programa de los Exámenes Públicos de las Alumnas de la Sra. de Mora*, 1829). Unfortunately it did not take long for the Moras and de Angelis couples to quarrel over the running of the school. These disagreements foreshadowed others of a political nature. The newly elected governor of Buenos Aires Manuel Dorrego had become the *de facto* leader of all the Argentine provinces. In an effort to balance the demands of both *unitarios* and *federales*, this former critic of Rivadavia approached Mora and De Angelis with a series of conciliatory proposals. The Neapolitan was prepared to consider them. Mora refused. Official

funding for their work ceased on the spot. An exit presented itself from an unexpected corner. Miguel Riesco y Puente, one of the two Chilean deputies at the Cortes of Cadiz was now in Buenos Aires acting as consul for the Chilean republic. He had received the same instructions as Egaña in London and took no time in poaching the Spaniard. On 1 December 1827, the Mora family was on their way to Santiago (Monguió, 1965: 328).

## **The First Chilean Factotum**

They arrived on 10 February 1828 to be immediately fêted by President Francisco Antonio Pinto and his ministers. Mora boasted to an Argentine friend about how he was offered a government post that he declined for fear of antagonising local civil servants with better claims to the job. According to his account, he and his wife found themselves ‘besieged’ by parents who wanted Fanny to open a school similar to the one in Buenos Aires, and for him to open a school for boys. Complete free rein in the organisation and in curriculum design was promised. As for the Chilean people, Mora found them docile and extremely tranquil, living through a revolution that was an ‘Octavian peace’ and under a liberal regime that had plans for a constitution that he would probably draft. Talk of disturbances arising from a conservative opposition of *pelucones* was merely not-to-be-believed chit-chat and idle rumour. Chile, Mora felt, had survived unscathed from the ‘sad disease’ of federalism, an ideology that in his view only the scum of society now supported. Agents of *sanscolutism* could be recognised in the entourage of Pinto, but he trusted the President to keep these harbingers of anarchy under control. Mora was adamant: everything was peaceful and would remain so (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 507-09).

His confidence was misplaced. Chile’s agriculturally-based economy had been seriously dislocated by the wars of independence and a spectacular growth in international

trade had yet to reap rewards. In 1826 Chile had become the first South American country to declare default in London (González Echenique, 1984: 598-99). In the space of one year, four different figures occupied the presidency in succession (Manuel Blanco Encalada, Agustín Eyzaguirre, Ramón Freire, finally Pinto), and for a few months the political arena had been dominated by an outsider, the federalist José Miguel Infante. Although his fortune began to wane with the suspension of a series of federal laws a few months earlier, Mora had gone ahead of events in underestimating the strength of the federalist cause. The whole political scene was far more complex than he had reckoned. Distinctions between liberals and conservatives, also known as *pipiolos* and *pelucones*, respectively, were misleading because personal alliances often shifted and boundaries between groups were frequently blurred. Liberals who had been federalists during the time of Infante's ascendancy, for example, would oppose him later on; a few would even join the ranks of the *pelucones*. Moreover, a deep-seated anxiety had taken hold of public opinion owing to a series of violent incidents that highlighted difficulties in keeping order in the provinces and in the process of military demobilisation, such as small-scale barracks mutinies.

Yet a widespread mood of new beginnings that favoured innovation and experimentation remained vibrantly alive. Political discussion was now being conducted by a wider range of people than ever before, mainly owing to the development of a strongly political newspaper press. In this context, Mora could not but feel at ease. The first issue of *El Mercurio Chileno* praised Chilean journalism for acting as a public tribunal to which the 'supreme power' frequently had to submit (*El Mercurio Chileno*, 1828. Presentación, issue 1, April, p. 1). He was soon to be given the chance to draft a law that would ensure the free exercise of such freedom through 'rational' regulation. Perhaps unsurprisingly under such circumstances, Mora thought that he had found in Pinto a man ready to take on the programme of reforms Rivadavia had been prevented from implementing in Argentina:

freedom of press, of trade and of religion, all guaranteed by a State organised under ‘rational’ centralist lines and run by an elite educated under European enlightened principles (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 508). In many ways, the assumption was not far off the mark. Mora was put at the head of the new *Liceo de Chile* to provide a liberal alternative to the *Instituto Nacional* which, although created by Patriots in 1813, still imparted the old-regime style syllabus of the colonial period that relied on the teaching of religious observance at the expense of other knowledge. In Fanny’s school, simply known as ‘El Colegio de la Señora de Mora’, girls could now learn geography, history, foreign languages, singing and dancing along with traditional religious practice (*Programa de los Exámenes Públicos de las Alumnas de la Sra. de Mora*, 1829; Briseño, R. 1965:54).

Unlike Rivadavia, however, Pinto opened the field to new ideas and practices without necessarily discarding old ones. While Mora’s school was granted a former army barracks as premises and forty-two government scholarships, official funding for the *Instituto Nacional* was left unperturbed. This even-handedness was similarly displayed with the appointment of Francisco Ruiz Tagle as Finance Minister and General Joaquín Prieto as commander of the army in the South, both men unsympathetic to liberal trends. To allay fears of a return to the perceived liberal ‘tyranny’ of the O’Higgins era, a minor cult of his main opponents, the Carrera brothers, was encouraged through the repatriation of their remains from Mendoza with a procession that ended with a civic-religious ceremony for which Mora, who disapproved of the whole idea, was commissioned to write a funeral poem (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 518-20). That was the least unpalatable of a series of concessions Mora felt had no choice but to make in order to remain in tune with the conciliatory style of his Chilean patron. More regrettable to him would be the incorporation of some federalist elements in the constitution of 1828, especially the establishment of autonomous provincial assemblies, and the dilution of the principle of freedom of religion to one that permitted the exercise of non-

Catholic faiths, but only in private. Not only would the constitution uphold the exclusivity of Catholicism by disallowing other forms of public worship, but a significant retrogressive step was also taken with the enactment of the Press Law that criminalised as blasphemy all published attacks on the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church (Rodríguez, 1921, vol. I: 516-23; Thurston, 2000: 1192; Cid Rodríguez, 2014: 170).

At the time, however, these measures seemed minor trade-offs that eased the way for a constitution that enshrined as inviolable the rights of petition and of freedom of the press, established mechanisms of checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judiciary while also seeking to maintain some equilibrium in the relationship between the central government and the provinces. With the abolition of the entailments that limited the inheritance of property over a number of generations to specific families (*mayorazgos*), the charter of 1828 also satisfied a substantial body of opinion garnered since the time of the O'Higgins administration that such change in the structure of land ownership would radically transform the Chilean economy. It would do so by removing a privilege that prevented heirs from breaking up estates and selling them to outsiders, thus fostering large-scale landholding that, as Adam Smith stated in *The Wealth of the Nations*, only served to confer to the nobility an advantage over the rest of their fellow citizens while leading to the unproductive use of the land [Smith [(1776) 2010], 496-7, 504]. Mora was not alone in thinking that he was witnessing a new dawn of rationality and order. As a testimony, the national congress granted him Chilean citizenship (31 January 1829) exercising the special dispensation for the naturalisation of foreigners that Article 6 of the constitutional text had conferred to the legislature. He was now part of a 'civilised community' that could proudly show by example the way to the rest of the world (Amunátegui, 1888: 184).

Elections in September 1829 reaffirmed Pinto as president, but a struggle over an irregularity in the election of the vice-president (Salazar Vergara, 2005: 328-55) threw the



country into a crisis which led to Pinto's resignation. The provinces of Concepción, in the South, and La Serena, in the North, withdrew their recognition of the national government, unleashing a chain of events that ended with the battles of Ochagavía (14 December 1829) and Lircay (17 April 1830). These victories of conservative forces over a loose coalition of liberals and federalists consolidated the political pre-eminence of Diego Portales, an influential Valparaíso businessman who a few months earlier had emerged as the leader of *pelucones* and *estanqueros*. The latter were men who, like Portales, had made a fortune from holding monopoly licenses for the sale of tobacco, playing cards, alcoholic drinks and tea (the *estanco*), all imported articles that benefited from the liberalisation of foreign trade that followed independence, and who felt aggrieved because their contracts were abruptly rescinded in 1826. Portales and his followers were quick to take advantage of laws protecting free expression to mount a press campaign that stigmatised the Pinto administration as one bent on spreading anti-clericalism and moral disorder, and to call for the establishment of a tougher, centralised government. Conservatives also profited from the pluralist policies adopted in the field of education. At the time of the elections of 1829, a group of leading families, with Diego Portales' support, were allowed to open the *Colegio de Santiago*. The purpose of the new school was to offer an educational alternative to both the *Instituto Nacional* and the government-sponsored *Liceo de Chile*. Yet in terms of curriculum, the new establishment offered hardly anything different from the latter, as both revolved around the teaching of Classics, Ancient and Modern European History, moral philosophy and political economy (specifically the works of Smith and Say) with the teaching of religion given only secondary attention (*Prospecto del Colegio de Santiago - La Sociedad de Profesores que se ha formado en Paris para establecer un Colejio en Santiago*, 1829). Education was regarded as the primary task of a republican government by both *pelucones* and *pipiolos* and the

consensus even extended to sharing Mora's views regarding the need to inculcate virtuous morality on future ruling elites.

Not for the first time, conflict began as a rather pedantic exchange between Mora and another scholar. In April 1830, in a speech inaugurating the Chair of Oratory at the *Liceo*, Mora sneered at the rival *Colegio de Santiago* with the prediction that its teaching staff, mainly of French origin, would resort to textbooks published in Paris and deemed to be so full of Gallicisms that they would erode the integrity of the Spanish language. The director of the *Colegio*, the Venezuelan Andrés Bello, came out in defence of the institution through a stream of unsigned newspaper articles where various neologisms and even Gallicisms deployed in the speech were singled out along with innuendos about Mora's Andalusian accent and uncouth misuse of grammar. The nature of the counter-attack was particularly unpleasant because Bello and Mora had collaborated in London. The dispute was petty and mind-numbing, but it was clear that the Venezuelan was positioning himself to take the role carved up for Mora as the factotum of the Chilean government. Bello soon became the writer of countless official reports and presidential speeches; he assisted in the preparation of the constitution of 1833, and as Mora, would dedicate much of his time to the editing of a government-sponsored newspaper, *El Araucano*, and in important educational projects. On 7 October 1832 he was also to be granted Chilean citizenship (Jaksic, 2001; Burr, 1965: 19).

After a month of bitter crossfire, the Portalian government withdrew financial support from the *Liceo*, an action that forced the institution to close down. A full-blown confrontation followed in the press, but about another policy implemented by the new regime. Prominent officers who showed lack of enthusiasm for the new order were cashiered. Bent on removing the liberal ascendancy within the military, the army itself saw its numbers reduced to 3,000 men by 1837 while Portales organised a civilian militia that recruited as many as 25,000 men (Rouquié, 1987: 52-3; Salazar Vergara, 2010: 112). Post-independence demilitarisation did

not necessarily involve the disarming and demobilisation of society. Mora denounced this situation as an affront to the spirit, if not to the letter, of the constitution, first in the appropriately entitled newspaper *El defensor de los militares constitucionales*, and when that outlet was closed down by the government, through the equally forthright periodical *El Trompeta*. On 14 February 1831 Portales had Mora arrested without due process and deported to Peru.

This was not quite the end of Mora's involvement in Chilean political life. His wife remained in the country to continue the battle in the press and in the courts, all the while running her school for girls (*El Trompeta*, 1831, Reclamo de infraccion de garantias, 18 February, *El Trompeta*, p.4; Valencia Avaria, 1985, vol. 33: 503). In Peru, the Spaniard took no time to contact the exiled O'Higgins about whom, a few months earlier, he had written a eulogy commissioned to be distributed as a pamphlet by the O'Higginist Ramon Mariano de Aris. Mora and the hero of Chilean independence shared an abiding faith in the power of education to instil an enduring love for order and rational liberty in society. They became close friends (Valencia Avaria, 1981, vol. 32: 82-3, 287). Mora forged a similar relationship with another veteran of the wars of independence, Ramon Freire, also living in Lima. Once a close ally of O'Higgins, Freire became his nemesis; the man who organised a coup and had him banished in 1823. Mora thought that it was time to settle differences and embarked on what seems to have been an unsolicited mission to reconcile the two men and the factions they represented within the liberal movement.

Mora tried to establish a line of communication with the two groups in Chile through a network of Fanny's female friends (*comadres*) who distributed his letters and made sure that carefully selected extracts were made public (Valencia Avaria, 1985, vol. 33: 546-7; 553). This was to little avail; indeed, Mora's intervention seems to have made matters worse as suspicion about his motives caused further divisions among *pipiolos* (Valencia Avaria,

1985, vol. 33: 546-7; Fondos Varios, vol. 244, pieza 40<sup>a</sup>). After five years of constant rejection and abuse, Mora confessed to a friend that he just could not care less for the opinions of the ‘bipeds’ of the country that he now called the *Beocia Americana*. He ended a letter with a poem that described Chile as a land where rational enlightenment had been replaced by populist obscurantism, a country that ‘having its soul bent and its stature stiffed by ignorance, it was no longer in any position to dazzle the rest of the world’ (Amunátegui, 1888: 292-3; Monguió, 1967: 158-9).

## Conclusion

The experience of José Joaquín de Mora provides valuable insights into the period of political experimentation that immediately followed the wars of independence. It shows that much of the Chilean ruling elite, far from being untraveled, poorly educated, and completely absorbed in the interests of its own limited environment (Burr, 1965: 17) belonged to a South American ‘cultural formation’ that, particularly during the late 1820s, took as its mission the making of the New World as an undisputed realm of ‘rational liberty’. Education was considered the best and most effective means to bring forward a project that revolved around a Eurocentric enlightenment discourse of universal progress that had sent down roots in the entire Hispanic world during the long eighteenth century. I have used the term ‘Neo-Europe’ in this context as a heuristic device to highlight transatlantic connections and continuities, particularly in the upholding of neo-classical views regarding the supremacy of reason and the attachment to eternal laws of regularity and order. These philosophical and aesthetic concerns had their expression in the political sphere through active opposition to anything that could be interpreted either as obscurantist despotism or as unregulated democracy, including occasionally among the latter models of federal governance that tried to put a break

to the process of 'rational' centralisation. The early republican period was also marked by the consensus that popular representation had to be mediated by an elite educated for that purpose on principles of European moral philosophy.

This may come to explain why, as Jaksic (2001) noted, Mora's short-lived tenure managed to influence Chilean education in ways which have endured. Although the *Liceo de Chile* did not survive, it proved that there could be viable alternatives to the colonial-style *Instituto Nacional*. This was as much a political as a pedagogical initiative. The Chilean constitution of 1833 included many of the principles of Mora's constitutional text such as the separation of powers, regular elections, and guarantees for individual rights, security, and property. The autonomous provincial assemblies were eliminated, but this was no great loss for Mora and his friends who had not wanted them in the first place. The nature of the Spaniard's role as the all-knowledgeable expert commissioned to provide blueprints for the nation's future, draft speeches for political leaders and to use the press as a tribune set the parameters of the position that Andrés Bello would occupy during three decades of Chilean conservative government. In socio-political terms, it is worth noting how the pre-eminence of non-Rousseauian enlightenment ideas meant that during this period (1820s-1830s) schemes for female intellectual and physical education found little opposition, and that a woman such as Fanny Mora could manage her own school and be publicly engaged in politics by defending her husband in the press and in the courts without causing uproar.

There were, however, important breaks in this narrative of enlightened continuity that serve to counter simplistic accounts of the 1820s as a decade of anarchy followed by one of progress and order. The Portalian regime paid little attention to the rule of law, curtailed press freedom, did away with the few gains made in terms of religious tolerance and re-instated the *mayorazgos*. It also put the onus of the state's monopoly of violence in the hands of armed

civilians rather than on a professional army. Deeply polarised, the liberal opposition did nothing but watch. These were the years of the *Beocia Americana* that made Mora despair. But all was not lost. Two of his students, José Joaquín Vallejo (later known as the writer ‘Jotabeche’) and José Victorino Lastarria, would be among those intellectual and political figures who contributed to the re-emergence of liberalism in the 1840s. In the meantime, the founder of *El Mercurio Chileno* worked as a journalist in Lima, and then moved to La Paz where he was appointed consul of the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation in London (1838-1839). Mora remained in the English capital for a few years, mainly acting as private agent of Andrés de Santa Cruz. Back in Spain in 1843, he became a leading figure of the Spanish moderate liberal establishment, joined the *Real Academia Española* and eventually was sent back to London to act as Spanish consul from 1850 to 1858 (Pizarro, 1984: 353-67). Mora’s bitterness toward Chile eventually subsided. Asked to write an overview of the situation in the Americas in 1853, he applauded the economic progress made by the country which he attributed to liberal fiscal measures placed by Pinto that his successors ‘had the good sense to extend’. He also praised Chile’s continuous attachment to the republican system of government, yet the article ended with an ominous reminder: ‘In the regime you have adopted, force resides in the law, not in bayonets; in consensus, not in coercion’ (Mora, 1853: 30-45). The spectre of the *Beocia Americana* simply refused to disappear.

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